

They Called It the Jesus Movement

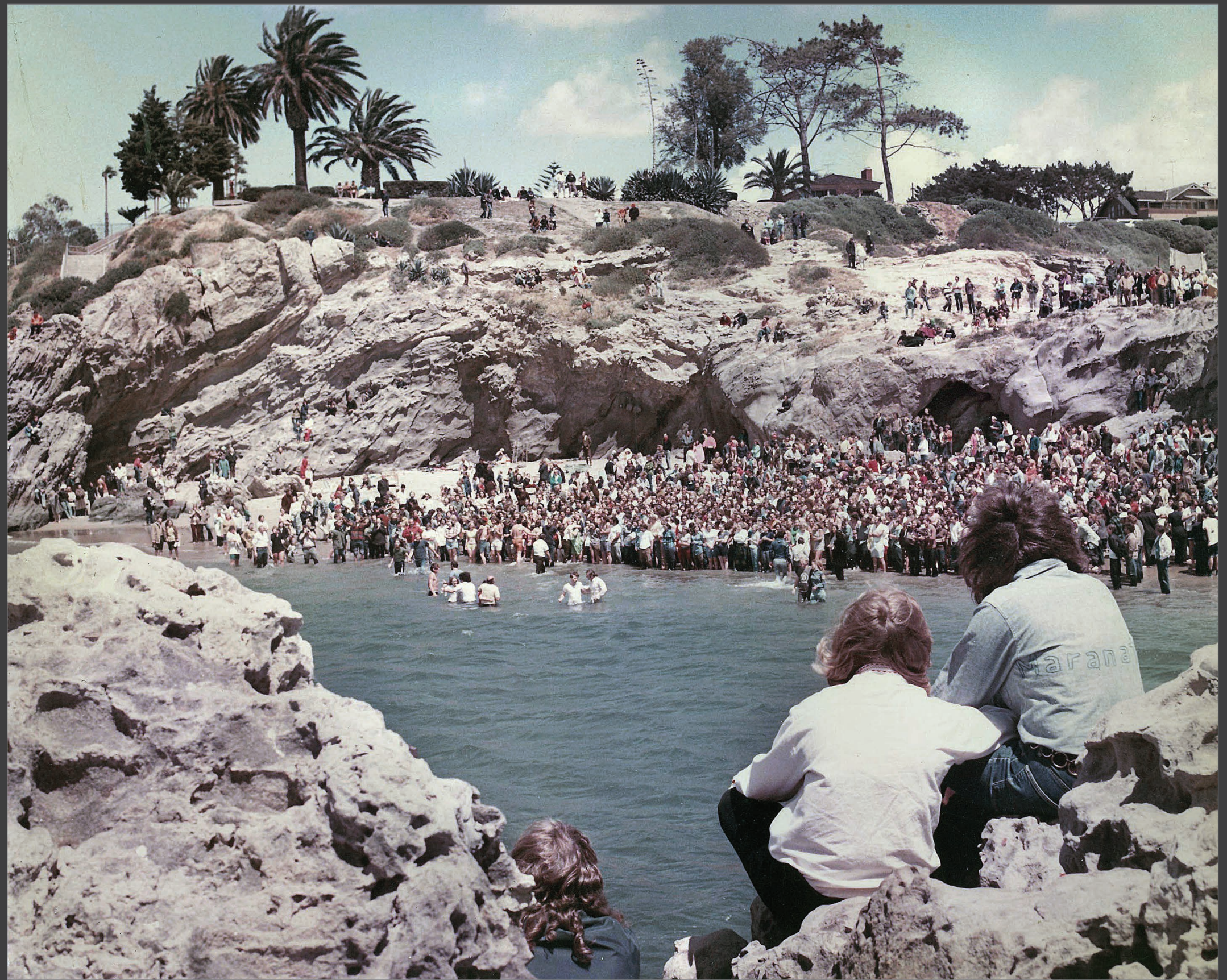
Story by Jessica Russell, Debra Smith, and Tom Price
Photos courtesy of CC Costa Mesa

No Shoes, No Problem

“No bare feet allowed,” read Pastor Chuck Smith as he approached the church door early one Sunday morning in the late 1960s. Angry and sad, Chuck removed the handwritten sign. Many in the fellowship he had been leading for several years were embracing their pastor’s desire to welcome streams of young people—mostly bearded, bearded, and barefooted—regardless of the counter-cultural individuals’ hygiene or lifestyle. But the sign indicated to Chuck that some congregants were focused on preserving the building’s brand-new carpet.

At the following church board meeting, Chuck expressed his and his wife Kay’s vision to impact the next generation for Christ. “We will love these kids and teach them God’s Word,” Chuck challenged the leaders of the fellowship, an independent church in Southern California simply called Calvary Chapel. They had already taught the new believers James 2:1-4, he pointed out: “My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes ... have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?” How could the church discriminate against the shoeless and shower-less, Chuck asked, after teaching them that Scripture? The point was well taken. From then on, Calvary Chapel’s leaders resolved to love the young hippies more than they valued material goods—or their own way of life.

Right: Hundreds routinely gathered for baptisms during the late 1960s and early '70s, necessitating that Calvary Chapel relocate baptisms from their building to Pirate's Cove in Newport Beach, CA.



Photos: Chuck served and sang alongside the young believers of the Jesus Movement. Below, they construct Calvary Chapel's building in the early '70s; below that, Chuck administers communion.



During the “Jesus Movement” that followed, hordes of hippies began to follow Christ as Lord and Savior. Many were discipled by Chuck and quickly saw themselves transformed by life-changing truth from God’s Word. As these believers eventually fanned out across the nation for employment or other reasons, many started home Bible studies patterned after Chuck’s verse-by-verse teaching style. Then as some of these groups expanded into full-fledged congregations, “Calvary Chapel” became not just a single church in Costa Mesa, CA, but a

network of fellowships. But before God would use him mightily to start such a phenomenon, Chuck often said, the Lord broke him of his reliance on himself and natural human tendency to glory in success. Only after he had failed much, Chuck elaborated, would he know that any tremendous work God accomplished through him was solely that—God’s work, due to God’s grace.

‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts. ZECARIAH 4:6b

Empty and Searching

When Chuck assumed Calvary Chapel's pastorate in 1965, the church consisted of 25 people. The generation then coming of age was exceptionally large, the product of the U.S.'s "baby boom" during post-World War II prosperity and optimism. However, said Chuck, the air of affluence masked an undercurrent of discontent youth. An unpopular war was providing them opportunity to voice their rage through protests and demonstrations. And Southern California was home to this cultural revolution.

As society seemed to shake and drugs circulated like candy, Chuck was repulsed and Kay was burdened. Again and again, he recounted, she tearfully and gently challenged her husband: "They just need the Lord." "They're dirty hippies. They need a bath," he said he would quip in return. Kay later explained, "I'd see them roaming the

streets or wherever they were, and I'd start crying. ... I started praying and asking God, 'Why? What's wrong with their lives?'" Kay discerned God telling her, in response, that they were empty—and needed Him.

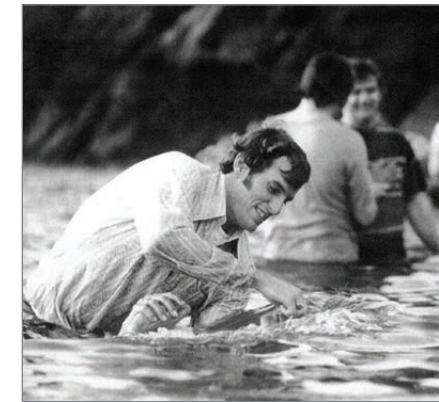
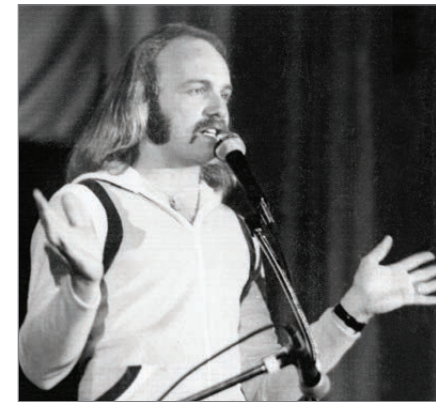
Entering the Hearts of Hippies

Her compassion won out, and the couple began studying the phenomenon. Yet they still felt unable to reach into the hippie culture. Chuck said that because of the generation and anti-establishment gaps, "They were so far from us. How do you even start to communicate with them?" As they prayed, it suddenly struck Kay: They needed to meet a hippie.

After being introduced to a couple who fit the hippie description, Chuck and Kay prepared the church to meet their new friends. The young people were well-received,

Top photos: Greg Laurie preaches; Don McClure baptizes a new believer; Jeff Johnson prays for a young man.

Bottom: Calvary Chapel's parking lot was routinely crowded with cars during "the Tent" days, after the church's growth from 25 to 2,000 necessitated meeting in a tent for a few years during the early 1970s.



and the countercultural community at Calvary Chapel began multiplying rapidly. A woman in the church rented a small house for young people to live and minister at in commune fashion; the home hosted nightly Bible studies and sent teams out daily to do street and beach evangelism. Within two weeks, 35 people had come to know the Lord and were staying there. A realtor soon offered a motel he owned for use as another Christian commune—the second of what would become several group homes.

Shocking Grace and Exponential Growth

Soon, Chuck reminisced, Calvary Chapel was baptizing hundreds of people per month. The revival was not without controversy; both internal struggle and external criticism of the Christian hippies and the church ebbed and flowed. But despite the challenges, the fellowship's countercultural community kept multiplying. Space problems became paramount, and the church tried one solution after another. The believers eventually purchased a large plot to build on; in the meantime, they erected "the Tent"—a 2½-year hub of the Jesus Movement. The structure held three Sunday morning services, in addition to Bible studies or concerts on most nights.

Looking back, many former hippies are shocked at the charity that was exhibited to them by Calvary Chapel's original conservative congregation. Sandy Chappell, who became a pastor's wife and helped plant several churches, remembers that she and friends regularly arrived at the tent in attire that, today, she would not

consider appropriate. Yet instead of harsh rebuke, they received gentle, loving instruction. Sharon Fischer, an original Calvary Chapel attendee, remembered: “Kay asked me to organize a fashion show. She said, ‘Let’s make this a grand event and show these young ladies how to dress modestly.’” Rather than a list of clothing to avoid, the demonstration presented the hippies a positive model to aspire to.

Sharon loved the diversity that began to abound. “What amazed me was walking into the tent and seeing so many types of people—hippies in beads and bell bottoms, business men in suits, and Indian women in traditional saris,” she expounded. “Chuck’s sermons were being translated into Chinese, Spanish, and other languages.”

Chuck’s approach to ministry, Sharon recalled, was hands-on and practical. “If anyone in the congregation had a problem—whether with a hot water heater, vehicle, or an electrical issue—Chuck would gather the men and correct the situation,” Sharon elaborated. She remembers many a Saturday morning dedicated to helping a family out of a crisis.

Once, Sharon said, Chuck’s penchant for labor brought disappointment. The ladies were on a retreat when a surprise blizzard blanketed the mountain. Many were excited to be snowed in, which gave them one more day together. However, “You can imagine our sadness the next morning when we looked out the window to see Chuck finishing shoveling out our cars,” she laughed.



"I can't think of a better piece of advice to leave to the next generation than 'Preach the Word!'"

CHUCK SMITH

Hippie Houses: Recollections by Pastor Chuck Smith

Chuck explains what happened after a hippie moved in with him and Kay in the late 1960s ...

In a couple of days he brought a couple of friends to stay with us. Pretty soon the house was getting pretty full. I said, “Honey, this isn’t going to work. We’re not ready for a hippie pad.” But the Lord caused us to realize that one of the big needs was a place for these kids to live. Having accepted Christ, they really had no place to go. The only ones who would have them were the hippie pads where the drugs were so prevalent that they were soon back into it.

So, in May of 1968 we rented a little two-bedroom house on 19th Street. ... By the end of the second week, 35 had accepted the Lord and moved into the house. We had built bunks out into the garage, and they were sleeping wall to wall through the house. One kid was even sleeping in the bathtub.

John Higgins, the elder of the house, called a meeting after the second week. He said, “All right, you guys!

We’ve got to have a house meeting. Some of you guys have been Christians now for two whole weeks. You’re sitting around here getting fat in the Word. Go out and evangelize! Everyone that’s been a Christian more than a week, split! Get out because we need room to bring in the new Christians.”

Those who had been Christians for over a week had to split. Some of them went out to Tahquitz Canyon and began to witness there. They came across a young girl sitting on a rock reading a Bible. She had a box of oats and tabs of acid. As they started to share Jesus Christ with her, she began to cry. She said, “You know, this really blows my mind! I came here two weeks ago to find God. I brought my oats, my acid, my book on Oriental religions, and the Bible. I finished the book on Oriental religions yesterday and started the Bible today. As I started reading, I didn’t understand. I said, ‘Oh, God, if You’re for real, bring someone along to tell me about it!’ Here you guys come up and start telling me about Jesus.”

Pioneering a Network

John Milhouse was one of the many hippies who submitted to Christ’s authority during the Jesus Movement and began a new life passionate about the Lord and His Word. “We didn’t think about going to the movies or on dates,” said John of his and his wife’s days at Calvary Chapel in the early 1970s. “If we were going to do something, we thought, *Let’s go to church or go tell people about Jesus.* We would go to Huntington Beach Pier to witness.” Personally, John added, “I got involved in everything I could at Calvary. Looking back, I see that for many of us, Chuck’s teaching was our seminary.” By averaging 10 chapters a week, Chuck was then leading the congregation through the entire Bible in about two years.

By the early 1980s, John said, “The hippie scene had played its course. Many young people who were saved in the ’70s had become parents with families and responsibilities—we weren’t kids anymore.” In 1982, when the Bible study in a friend’s living room in Moreno Valley, CA, outgrew the house, John asked Chuck if he could start a church affiliated with Calvary Chapel. “Welcome aboard!” was Chuck’s resounding answer, and through

the coming years, John would often look to Chuck for pastoral advice. “In those days, I didn’t have anyone else to call; everyone was so young,” John recalled. “Chuck would always take my phone calls, getting on the phone with a booming, ‘Hello, John,’ and make me feel that my call was the most important conversation of his day. He didn’t always give answers; he directed me to the Lord.”

The story kept repeating itself: As children of the Jesus Movement grew in the Lord, relocated to various cities, and began home Bible studies that grew into churches, Calvary Chapels popped up throughout Southern California and then the rest of the nation. Over the years, Chuck and Kay cared for this increasing number of new pastors and their wives—many of whom were thrust into a ministry they hadn’t envisioned. Sandy Chappell, after moving with her husband Robert from California to New

Left: Chuck poses for a picture with attendees of the 2012 CC East Coast Pastors Conference in North East, MD. Eventgoers were uncertain whether Chuck could make the trip and were overjoyed when he arrived.

Grace Changes Everything—Jeff Johnson

In 1968, Jeff Johnson set off for Hawaii to pursue psychic powers. But after a near-death experience with LSD, Jeff realized that if he didn't change his drug habits, he would soon be dead. He quit his chicken farm job, sold his surfboard, returned to California, and got married. Despite his resolve, however, he succumbed to narcotics. Then one evening, Jeff's drug dealer stopped by with an invitation. Having given his life to Jesus three days prior at Calvary Chapel, the former dealer wanted Jeff to experience the same freedom. "So I grabbed my wife and little baby—and I was loaded out of my mind—and he brought me around the corner to a little church," Jeff recalled. "I got saved that night, and I went home and flushed all my drugs."

After Jeff started a Bible study under a gazebo at a park in Downey, CA, the group grew rapidly and eventually developed into CC Downey. Once when a problem arose, Jeff drove to CC Costa Mesa to speak to Chuck after a service. Chuck's back was hurting that evening, but he took Jeff into his office and listened carefully, gave counsel, and prayed for him.

During a pastors' conference in the 1980s, Jeff and his wife were quarrelling in their room. "We were fighting like cats and dogs. Chuck brought Kay into our room, and they talked with us and calmed it all down," Jeff shared. "They loved us so much and were very concerned for us." Jeff said he has learned, from Chuck's words and example, that "Grace changes everything!"

York to plant churches, remembers a time at an early leaders' conference when her young children were tired and cranky. As she quieted them in the hall, Chuck walked by. Seeing Sandy's frustration, she recalled, "He turned around and smiled, as if to say, 'These kids will grow up faster than you realize, so take this time to enjoy it.' It was such good advice. His life affected us even though we lived 3,000 miles from Costa Mesa."

Sharon Fischer's husband Hal, one of the original church board members who hired Chuck in 1965, was also the police chief for the nearby city of Placentia, CA. As such, he witnessed the Lord changing the lives of Calvary Chapel's young believers in ways he knew no jail sentence ever could. One day, a police officer who attended the fellowship asked Hal: "Would it be a conflict of interest for me to begin a Bible study in my home?" The chief, who had been noticing the young employee's growth in Christ, replied,

"That is perfectly fine, but I hate to lose one of my best officers." Confused, the man clarified that he had no intention of resigning. Hal simply smiled and gave him his blessing. The young believer was Bob Kopeny, and Hal's prediction soon became reality—as the study blossomed into CC East Anaheim, CA, and Bob became a full-time pastor.

"Shepherds don't beget sheep. Sheep beget sheep," Sharon Fischer remembered Chuck telling the congregation in the early days. "Chuck always told us that we were the ones who were to carry this message into the world. There are now more than 1,500 Calvary Chapel churches, Bible colleges, and conference centers worldwide. We can certainly give Chuck tribute for his obedience—coming to this little church, loving us, and teaching us 10 Bible chapters verse by verse every Sunday. But having so many ministries on so many continents is a miracle of God. Pastor Chuck would be the first to say, 'Amen; all the glory goes to the Lord!'"

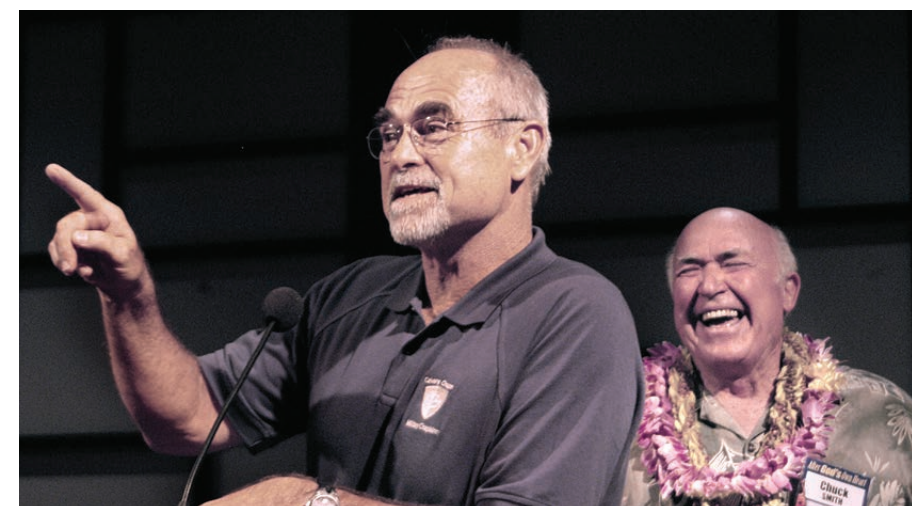
"What will happen after I die? ... I hope that our pastors will continue teaching the Word of God, line upon line and ... [that] they will always remember that the power of the Spirit lies in reliance on the Spirit." CHUCK SMITH



The Lord Adds—Joe Focht

"Thinking of Chuck ... there have been certain texts that he talked about early that I've thought about over the years," said Pastor Joe Focht, who was saved during the hippie days at CC Costa Mesa and later planted CC Philadelphia, PA. One favorite was Acts 2:47b: "The Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." Joe said this passage lifts "the burden off of us"—as it's not ultimately God's servants, but God Himself, who saves people.

Several of Chuck's favorite quips summarized other biblical principles, Joe added. "Where God guides, God provides," he remembered Chuck often saying. Joe remarked that at CC Philadelphia, "That has kept us out of debt; it's kept us out of problems. Also, that you 'Never give up what you do know for what you don't know,'" Joe continued. "And of course, 'Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be broken.'"



Above: Chuck and Joe Focht engage in a panel discussion at the East Coast Pastors Conference in 2012.

Left: Bill Stonebraker answers whether he felt slighted by the fact that Chuck dedicated Bill's grandchildren, rather than himself. "If I could, I would jump up into Chuck's arms myself and let him dedicate me," quipped Bill. Chuck visited the church Bill leads, CC Honolulu, HI, almost yearly since '73 and spoke at their conferences.